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ABSTRACT

This book examines the successes of the Open University (OU), a concept now 25 years old, in overcoming obstacles to higher education faced by nontraditional students, and particularly those faced by older women. The OU has no entry qualification, requires no tests, admits all applicants on a space-available basis, and awards a Bachelor's degree. In paired chapters, with each chapter detailing a specific obstacle that has turned women away from school and its companion chapter telling the story of how one woman overcame this challenge, the book deals with topics such as: (1) streaming (assigning students on the basis of sex or class); (2) channeling (shunting girls into traditionally female subjects and refusing to enroll them in maths and science); (3) early educational failure ("grading on the curve"); (4) low self-confidence (beginning in nursery school); (5) male bias (lower priority for girls' needs); (6) lack of emotional support (from parents, teachers, classmates, spouses, or children); (7) lack of financial support (programs available for men but not for women); (8) university life's lack of fit (tacit or overt hostility to mature women students); and (9) the homemaker role (stereotyping women). (Contains 91 references and selected resources.) (BF)

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